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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 003440

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER AF

SUBJECT: PRT/TARIN KOWT - HANDOVER TO DUTCH COULD MEAN  
SHORT-TERM DROP OFF IN OPERATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Neumann, for reasons 1.4 b, d.

11. (C) Summary: The assumption of control of the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) by the Dutch from the U.S. on August 1 immediately following the transfer of the PRT from OEF to ISAF on 31 July has revealed some challenges that may take several months to resolve, although none are expected to detract from long-term effectiveness. Two factors in particular could lead to an initial drop in PRT activity: an anticipated vehicle mix that is not well suited to the environment, and the delayed arrival of the full force protection element. The Dutch are attempting to work out short term mitigation plans for vehicles with the Australians or Canadians while working to find a long-term solution. End Summary.

The Deployment Task Force: Behind in Preparations

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12. (C) The Dutch Deployment Task Force, which is preparing the main Dutch base in Uruzgan Province at Forward Operation Base (FOB) Ripley in Tarin Kowt and a smaller one at FOB Tycz in Deh Rawud, is behind in its preparations. The physical facilities of the Tarin Kowt base are not yet ready for the roughly 1,500 Dutch troops that will be housed there and similar challenges exist at FOB Tycz, which will house nearly 300 troops. The soldiers are still living in tents left over from previous U.S. deployments and the bullet-proof and bomb resistant shipping containers that all Dutch troops will eventually live in have not yet been constructed -

it is unclear whether they are all in country yet. Only three of the 11 expected rifle platoons are in Uruzgan, in part because of a lack of facilities to receive them, but also because the internal perimeter is still under construction though the exterior perimeter, one that preexisted the Dutch commitment to Uruzgan, is built and manned.

Transportation: Lacking Adequate Vehicles, Mission Frequency May Decrease

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**¶3. (C)** The Dutch now have three types of military vehicles for Uruzgan, none of which is practical for the operating environment. The basic tactical vehicle the Dutch use is a Mercedes-Benz truck that is unarmored, lacks ballistic glass, and has an open top. While it has two machine guns at the ready, in contrast to the single 240 Bravo or the 50 caliber machine guns the U.S. humvees are usually armed with, and is faster due to its lack of armor, that lack of armor could make it an attractive target for insurgents. The Dutch also have tracked and wheeled armored personnel carriers (APC). The tracked APC cannot be used in Tarin Kowt because it would destroy the newly paved roads, and its use on PRT missions into surrounding villages would not send the right message to local villagers. There are unfortunately echoes of the Soviet occupation if tracked APCs are used in Uruzgan. The second type of APC, the Patria, is a large, six-wheeled vehicle. It, too, could have image problems, and it is also

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too large and cumbersome to handle large swaths of Uruzgan's terrain. One Patria was lost in May when it could not navigate itself out of a ravine and had to be destroyed. Dutch commanders are quite aware of the limitations of their vehicles and have ordered twenty-five Nyalas - armored APCs with four wheels that stand several feet off the ground - but these are not yet in country (though news reports say the Dutch plan to borrow ten of them from the Canadians). The Nyalas are much more appropriate for Uruzgan's operating environment, but until they arrive the lack of mobility will likely impact Dutch PRT activities.

The Dutch PRT: Ready to Work

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**¶4. (C)** Though its facilities at FOB Ripley are not yet ready, the Dutch PRT has easily integrated itself into the operations of the U.S.-led PRT and is expected to temporarily establish itself at the U.S. PRT after U.S. personnel have left for Nuristan Province. The PRT's physical infrastructure will continue to be "owned" by the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF). Five Dutch soldiers have been part of the PRT for the last several months, and all of them have gone on missions. Additionally, the handover has gone particularly well with respect to Civil-Affairs projects. PRTOff has been working closely with the incoming commander and his staff to improve their situational awareness and to establish a strategy for the province.

**¶5. (C)** The Dutch team is led by Lieutenant Colonel Nico Tak, who comes from the Dutch military's armor community; his staff have worked for him for over two years. The Dutch PRT will have three four-man civil affairs teams, one of which will be based at FOB Tycz in Deh Rawud, and a robust staff element that includes a Political Advisor, Development Advisor, and a Tribal/Cultural Advisor. Unlike the U.S. PRT, the Dutch PRT will not have an organic

force protection element but will be supported by the Dutch Battle Group at FOB Ripley. Because the Battle Group currently only has three platoons, which will be largely preoccupied with protecting their perimeter and constructing its physical infrastructure, Dutch PRT operations will be limited until additional forces arrive. In addition to a lack of direct control of force protection assets and the fact that their use could be vetoed by another Lieutenant Colonel who controls them, the Dutch PRT Task Force Commander must also approve each request for force protection for the Dutch PRT. Another difference from the U.S.-led PRT is that most of the personnel of the Dutch PRT will rotate out at six and four months intervals. This stands in contrast with the usual year-long deployments of U.S. personnel.

Comment

¶ 6. (C) While the Dutch PRT will largely be ready to operate by August 1, its overall effectiveness is expected to be limited due to inadequate vehicles

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and force protection. As improvements at FOB Ripley continue and the Dutch Battle Group gets up to its full strength and receives appropriate vehicles for the province, the PRT's operations will significantly increase due to larger staff resources. It is unclear how long this will take. One hopes the transportation dilemma can be temporarily solved by mounting joint Dutch/Australian missions; the Australians have properly armored vehicles and will have an approximately 320-man element attached to the PRT. Whether such joint missions would be politically possible for the Dutch remains to be seen. However the Dutch remain keen to succeed in their commitment and are actively looking for workarounds to solve these short-term logistical problems.

NEUMANN